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Poetry Reprint Series

**HARMONIUM**

**by Wallace Stevens**

**St. James Press**  
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# Harmonium

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F ALL, 1923

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# Harmonium

*by Wallace Stevens*



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*To*  
**MY WIFE**



The poems in this book, with the exception of *The Comedian as the Letter C* and a few others, have been published before in *Others*, *Secession*, *Rogue*, *The Soil*, *The Modern School*, *Broom*, *Contact*, *The New Republic*, *The Measure*, *The Little Review*, *The Dial*, and particularly in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, of Chicago, edited by Harriet Monroe.



## Contents

Earthy Anecdote	15
Invective against Swans	16
In the Carolinas	17
The Paltry Nude Starts on a Spring Voyage	18
The Plot against the Giant	20
Infanta Marina	21
Domination of Black	22
The Snow Man	24
The Ordinary Women	25
The Load of Sugar-Cane	27
Le Monocle de Mon Oncle	28
Nuances of a Theme by Williams	34
Metaphors of a Magnifico	35
Ploughing on Sunday	36
Cy Est Pourtraicte, Madame Ste Ursule, et Les Unze Mille Vierges	37
Hibiscus on the Sleeping Shores	39
Fabliau of Florida	40
The Doctor of Geneva	41
Another Weeping Woman	42
Homunculus et la Belle Etoile	43
The Comedian as the Letter C	46
The World without Imagination	47
Concerning the Thunderstorms of Yucatan	50
Approaching Carolina	54
The Idea of a Colony	58
A Nice Shady Home	62
And Daughters with Curls	66

From the Misery of Don Joost	70
O, Florida, Venereal Soil	71
Last Looks at the Lilacs	73
The Worms at Heaven's Gate	74
The Jack Rabbit	75
Valley Candle	76
Anecdote of Men by the Thousand	77
The Silver Plough-Boy	78
The Apostrophe to Vincentine	79
Floral Decorations for Bananas	81
Anecdote of Canna	83
Of the Manner of Addressing Clouds	84
Of Heaven Considered as a Tomb	85
Of the Surface of Things	86
Anecdote of the Prince of Peacocks	87
A High-Toned Old Christian Woman	89
The Place of the Solitaires	90
The Weeping Burgher	91
The Curtains in the House of the Metaphysician	92
Banal Sojourn	93
Depression before Spring	94
The Emperor of Ice-Cream	95
The Cuban Doctor	96
Tea at the Palaz of Hoon	97
Exposition of the Contents of a Cab	98
Disillusionment of Ten O'clock	99
Sunday Morning	100
The Virgin Carrying a Lantern	105
Stars at Tallapoosa	106
Explanation	107
Six Significant Landscapes	108
Bantams in Pine-Woods	111
Anecdote of the Jar	112
Palace of the Babies	113

Frogs Eat Butterflies. Snakes Eat Frogs. Hogs Eat Snakes. Men Eat Hogs	114
Jasmine's Beautiful Thoughts underneath the Willow	115
Cortège for Rosenbloom	116
Tattoo	118
The Bird with the Coppery, Keen Claws	119
Life is Motion	120
Architecture	121
The Wind Shifts	124
Colloquy with a Polish Aunt	125
Gubbinal	126
Two Figures in Dense Violet Night	127
Theory	128
To the One of Fictive Music	129
Hymn from a Watermelon Pavilion	131
Peter Quince at the Clavier	132
Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird	135
Nomad Exquisite	138
Tea	139
To the Roaring Wind	140



# Harmonium



## Earthy Anecdote

Every time the bucks went clattering  
Over Oklahoma  
A firecat bristled in the way.

Wherever they went,  
They went clattering,  
Until they swerved  
In a swift, circular line  
To the right,  
Because of the firecat.

Or until they swerved  
In a swift, circular line  
To the left,  
Because of the firecat.

The bucks clattered.  
The firecat went leaping,  
To the right, to the left,  
And  
Bristled in the way.

Later, the firecat closed his bright eyes  
And slept.

## Invective against Swans

The soul, O ganders, flies beyond the parks  
And far beyond the discords of the wind.

A bronze rain from the sun descending marks  
The death of summer, which that time endures

Like one who scrawls a listless testament  
Of golden quirks and Paphian caricatures,

Bequeathing your white feathers to the moon  
And giving your bland motions to the air.

Behold, already on the long parades  
The crows anoint the statues with their dirt.

And the soul, O ganders, being lonely, flies  
Beyond your chilly chariots, to the skies.

## In the Carolinas

The lilacs wither in the Carolinas.  
Already the butterflies flutter above the cabins.  
Already the new-born children interpret love  
In the voices of mothers.

Timeless mother,  
How is it that your aspic nipples  
For once vent honey?

*The pine-tree sweetens my body.  
The white iris beautifies me.*

## The Paltry Nude Starts on a Spring Voyage

But not on a shell, she starts,  
Archaic, for the sea.  
But on the first-found weed  
She scuds the glitters,  
Noiselessly, like one more wave.

She too is discontent  
And would have purple stuff upon her arms,  
Tired of the salty harbors,  
Eager for the brine and bellowing  
Of the high interiors of the sea.

The wind speeds her,  
Blowing upon her hands  
And watery back.  
She touches the clouds, where she goes  
In the circle of her traverse of the sea.

Yet this is meagre play  
In the scurry and water-shine,  
As her heels foam—  
Not as when the goldener nude  
Of a later day

Will go, like the centre of sea-green pomp,  
In an intenser calm,  
Scullion of fate,  
Across the spick torrent, ceaselessly,  
Upon her irretrievable way.

## The Plot against the Giant

### *First Girl*

When this yokel comes maundering,  
Whetting his hacker,  
I shall run before him,  
Diffusing the civilest odors  
Out of geraniums and unsmelled flowers.  
It will check him.

### *Second Girl*

I shall run before him,  
Arching cloths besprinkled with colors  
As small as fish-eggs.  
The threads  
Will abash him.

### *Third Girl*

Oh, la . . . le pauvre!  
I shall run before him,  
With a curious puffing.  
He will bend his ear then.  
I shall whisper  
Heavenly labials in a world of gutturals.  
It will undo him.

## Infanta Marina

Her terrace was the sand  
And the palms and the twilight.

She made of the motions of her wrist  
The grandiose gestures  
Of her thought.

The rumpling of the plumes  
Of this creature of the evening  
Came to be sleights of sails  
Over the sea.

And thus she roamed  
In the roamings of her fan,

Partaking of the sea,  
And of the evening,  
As they flowed around  
And uttered their subsiding sound.

## Domination of Black

At night, by the fire,  
The colors of the bushes  
And of the fallen leaves,  
Repeating themselves,  
Turned in the room,  
Like the leaves themselves  
Turning in the wind.  
Yes: but the color of the heavy hemlocks  
Came striding.  
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks.

The colors of their tails  
Were like the leaves themselves  
Turning in the wind,  
In the twilight wind.  
They swept over the room,  
Just as they flew from the boughs of the hemlocks  
Down to the ground.  
I heard them cry—the peacocks.  
Was it a cry against the twilight  
Or against the leaves themselves  
Turning in the wind,  
Turning as the flames  
Turned in the fire,  
Turning as the tails of the peacocks

Turned in the loud fire,  
Loud as the hemlocks  
Full of the cry of the peacocks?  
Or was it a cry against the hemlocks?

Out of the window,  
I saw how the planets gathered  
Like the leaves themselves  
Turning in the wind.  
I saw how the night came,  
Came striding like the color of the heavy hemlocks.  
I felt afraid.  
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks.

## The Snow Man

One must have a mind of winter  
To regard the frost and the boughs  
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;

And have been cold a long time  
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,  
The spruces rough in the distant glitter

Of the January sun; and not to think  
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,  
In the sound of a few leaves,

Which is the sound of the land  
Full of the same wind  
That is blowing in the same bare place

For the listener, who listens in the snow,  
And, nothing himself, beholds  
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

## The Ordinary Women

Then from their poverty they rose,  
From dry catarrhs, and to guitars  
They flitted  
Through the palace walls.

They flung monotony behind,  
Turned from their want, and, nonchalant,  
They crowded  
The nocturnal halls.

The lacquered loges huddled there  
Mumbled zay-zay and a-zay, a-zay.  
The moonlight  
Fubbed the girandoles.

And the cold dresses that they wore,  
In the vapid haze of the window-bays,  
Were tranquil  
As they leaned and looked

From the window-sills at the alphabets,  
At beta b and gamma g,  
To study  
The canting curlicues

Of heaven and of the heavenly script.  
And there they read of marriage-bed.  
Ti-lill-o!  
And they read right long.

The gaunt guitarists on the strings  
Rumbled a-day and a-day, a-day.  
The moonlight  
Rose on the beachy floors.

How explicit the coiffures became,  
The diamond point, the sapphire point,  
The sequins  
Of the civil fans!

Insinuations of desire,  
Puissant speech, alike in each,  
Cried quittance  
To the wickless halls.

Then from their poverty they rose,  
From dry guitars, and to catarrhs  
They flitted  
Through the palace walls.

## The Load of Sugar-Cane

The going of the glade-boat  
Is like water flowing;

Like water flowing  
Through the green saw-grass,  
Under the rainbows;

Under the rainbows  
That are like birds,  
Turning, bedizened,

While the wind still whistles  
As kildeer do,

When they rise  
At the red turban  
Of the boatman.

## Le Monocle de Mon Oncle

### I

“Mother of heaven, regina of the clouds,  
O sceptre of the sun, crown of the moon,  
There is not nothing, no, no, never nothing,  
Like the clashed edges of two words that kill.”  
And so I mocked her in magnificent measure.  
Or was it that I mocked myself alone?  
I wish that I might be a thinking stone.  
The sea of spuming thought foists up again  
The radiant bubble that she was. And then  
A deep up-pouring from some saltier well  
Within me, bursts its watery syllable.

### II

A red bird flies across the golden floor.  
It is a red bird that *seeks* out his choir  
Among the choirs of wind and wet and wing.  
A torrent will fall from him when he finds.  
Shall I uncrumple this much-crumpled thing?  
I am a man of fortune greeting heirs;  
For it has come that thus I greet the spring.  
These choirs of welcome choir for me farewell.  
No spring can follow past meridian.  
Yet you persist with anecdotal bliss  
To make believe a starry *connaissance*.

### III

Is it for nothing, then, that old Chinese  
Sat tittivating by their mountain pools  
Or in the Yangste studied out their beards?  
I shall not play the flat historic scale.  
You know how Utamaro's beauties sought  
The end of love in their all-speaking braids.  
You know the mountainous coiffures of Bath.  
Alas! Have all the barbers lived in vain  
That not one curl in nature has survived?  
Why, without pity on these studious ghosts,  
Do you come dripping in your hair from sleep?

### IV

This luscious and impeccable fruit of life  
Falls, it appears, of its own weight to earth.  
When you were Eve, its acrid juice was sweet,  
Untasted, in its heavenly, orchard air.  
An apple serves as well as any skull  
To be the book in which to read a round,  
And is as excellent, in that it is composed  
Of what, like skulls, comes rotting back to ground.  
But it excels in this, that as the fruit  
Of love, it is a book too mad to read  
Before one merely reads to pass the time.

### V

In the high west there burns a furious star.  
It is for fiery boys that star was set  
And for sweet-smelling virgins close to them.  
The measure of the intensity of love

Is measure, also, of the verve of earth.  
For me, the firefly's quick, electric stroke  
Ticks tediously the time of one more year.  
And you? Remember how the crickets came  
Out of their mother grass, like little kin,  
In the pale nights, when your first imagery  
Found inklings of your bond to all that dust.

## VI

If men at forty will be painting lakes  
The ephemeral blues must merge for them in one,  
The basic slate, the universal hue.  
There is a substance in us that prevails.  
But in our amours amorists discern  
Such fluctuations that their scrivening  
Is breathless to attend each quirky turn.  
When amorists grow bald, then amours shrink  
Into the compass and curriculum  
Of introspective exiles, lecturing.  
It is a theme for Hyacinth alone.

## VII

The mules that angels ride come slowly down  
The blazing passes, from beyond the sun.  
Descensions of their tinkling bells arrive.  
These muleteers are dainty of their way.  
Meantime, centurions guffaw and beat  
Their shrilling tankards on the table-boards.  
This parable, in sense, amounts to this:  
The honey of heaven may or may not come,  
But that of earth both comes and goes at once.

Suppose these couriers brought amid their train  
A damsel heightened by eternal bloom.

## VIII

Like a dull scholar, I behold, in love,  
An ancient aspect touching a new mind.  
It comes, it blooms, it bears its fruit and dies.  
This trivial trope reveals a way of truth.  
Our bloom is gone. We are the fruit thereof.  
Two golden gourds distended on our vines,  
We hang like warty squashes, streaked and rayed,  
Into the autumn weather, splashed with frost,  
Distorted by hale fatness, turned grotesque.  
The laughing sky will see the two of us  
Washed into rinds by rotting winter rains.

## IX

In verses wild with motion, full of din,  
Loudened by cries, by clashes, quick and sure  
As the deadly thought of men accomplishing  
Their curious fates in war, come, celebrate  
The faith of forty, ward of Cupido.  
Most venerable heart, the lustiest conceit  
Is not too lusty for your broadening.  
I quiz all sounds, all thoughts, all everything  
For the music and manner of the paladins  
To make oblation fit. Where shall I find  
Bravura adequate to this great hymn?

## X

The fops of fancy in their poems leave  
Memorabilia of the mystic spouts,

Spontaneously watering their gritty soils.  
I am a yeoman, as such fellows go.  
I know no magic trees, no balmy boughs,  
No silver-ruddy, gold-vermilion fruits.  
But, after all, I know a tree that bears  
A semblance to the thing I have in mind.  
It stands gigantic, with a certain tip  
To which all birds come sometime in their time.  
But when they go that tip still tips the tree.

## XI

If sex were all, then every trembling hand  
Could make us squeak, like dolls, the wished-for words.  
But note the unconscionable treachery of fate,  
That makes us weep, laugh, grunt and groan, and shout  
Doleful heroics, pinching gestures forth  
From madness or delight, without regard  
To that first, foremost law. Anguishing hour!  
Last night, we sat beside a pool of pink,  
Clippered with lilies scudding the bright chromes,  
Keen to the point of starlight, while a frog  
Boomed from his very belly odious chords.

## XII

A blue pigeon it is, that circles the blue sky,  
On side-long wing, around and round and round.  
A white pigeon it is, that flutters to the ground,  
Grown tired of flight. Like a dark rabbi, I  
Observed, when young, the nature of mankind,  
In lordly study. Every day, I found  
Man proved a gobbet in my mincing world.

Like a rose rabbi, later, I pursued,  
And still pursue, the origin and course  
Of love, but until now I never knew  
That fluttering things have so distinct a shade.

## Nuances of a Theme by Williams

*I t's a strange courage  
you give me, ancient star:*

*Shine alone in the sunrise  
toward which you lend no part!*

### I

Shine alone, shine nakedly, shine like bronze,  
that reflects neither my face nor any inner part  
of my being, shine like fire, that mirrors nothing.

### II

Lend no part to any humanity that suffuses  
you in its own light.  
Be not chimera of morning,  
Half-man, half-star.  
Be not an intelligence,  
Like a widow's bird  
Or an old horse.

## Metaphors of a Magnifico

Twenty men crossing a bridge,  
Into a village,  
Are twenty men crossing twenty bridges,  
Into twenty villages,  
Or one man  
Crossing a single bridge into a village.

This is old song  
That will not declare itself . . .

Twenty men crossing a bridge,  
Into a village,  
Are  
Twenty men crossing a bridge  
Into a village.

That will not declare itself  
Yet is certain as meaning . . .

The boots of the men clump  
On the boards of the bridge.  
The first white wall of the village  
Rises through fruit-trees.  
Of what was it I was thinking?

So the meaning escapes.

The first white wall of the village . . .  
The fruit-trees. . . .

## Ploughing on Sunday

The white cock's tail  
Tosses in the wind.  
The turkey-cock's tail  
Glitters in the sun.

Water in the fields.  
The wind pours down.  
The feathers flare  
And bluster in the wind.

Remus, blow your horn!  
I'm ploughing on Sunday,  
Ploughing North America.  
Blow your horn!

Tum-ti-tum,  
Ti-tum-tum-tum!  
The turkey-cock's tail  
Spreads to the sun.

The white cock's tail  
Streams to the moon.  
Water in the fields.  
The wind pours down.

## Cy Est Pourtraicte, Madame Ste Ursule, et Les Unze Mille Vierges

Ursula, in a garden, found  
A bed of radishes.  
She kneeled upon the ground  
And gathered them,  
With flowers around,  
Blue, gold, pink, and green.

She dressed in red and gold brocade  
And in the grass an offering made  
Of radishes and flowers.

She said, "My dear,  
Upon your altars,  
I have placed  
The marguerite and coquelicot,  
And roses  
Frail as April snow;  
But here," she said,  
"Where none can see,  
I make an offering, in the grass,  
Of radishes and flowers."  
And then she wept  
For fear the Lord would not accept.

The good Lord in His garden sought  
New leaf and shadowy tinct,  
And they were all His thought.  
He heard her low accord,  
Half prayer and half ditty,  
And He felt a subtle quiver,  
That was not heavenly love,  
Or pity.

This is not writ  
In any book.

## Hibiscus on the Sleeping Shores

I say now, Fernando, that on that day  
The mind roamed as a moth roams,  
Among the blooms beyond the open sand;

And that whatever noise the motion of the waves  
Made on the sea-weeds and the covered stones  
Disturbed not even the most idle ear.

Then it was that that monstered moth  
Which had lain folded against the blue  
And the colored purple of the lazy sea,

And which had drowsed along the bony shores,  
Shut to the blather that the water made,  
Rose up besprent and sought the flaming red

Dabbled with yellow pollen—red as red  
As the flag above the old café—  
And roamed there all the stupid afternoon.

## Fabliau of Florida

Barque of phosphor  
On the palmy beach,

Move outward into heaven,  
Into the alabasters  
And night blues.

Foam and cloud are one.  
Sultry moon-monsters  
Are dissolving.

Fill your black hull  
With white moonlight.

There will never be an end  
To this droning of the surf.

## The Doctor of Geneva

The doctor of Geneva stamped the sand  
That lay impounding the Pacific swell,  
Patted his stove-pipe hat and tugged his shawl.

Lacustrine man had never been assailed  
By such long-rolling opulent cataracts,  
Unless Racine or Bossuet held the like.

He did not quail. A man so used to plumb  
The multifarious heavens felt no awe  
Before these visible, voluble delugings,

Which yet found means to set his simmering mind  
Spinning and hissing with oracular  
Notations of the wild, the ruinous waste,

Until the steeples of his city clanked and sprang  
In an unburgherly apocalypse.  
The doctor used his handkerchief and sighed.

## Another Weeping Woman

Pour the unhappiness out  
From your too bitter heart,  
Which grieving will not sweeten.

Poison grows in this dark.  
It is in the water of tears  
Its black blooms rise.

The magnificent cause of being,  
The imagination, the one reality  
In this imagined world

Leaves you  
With him for whom no phantasy moves,  
And you are pierced by a death.

## Homunculus et La Belle Etoile

In the sea, Biscayne, there prinks  
The young emerald, evening star,  
Good light for drunkards, poets, widows,  
And ladies soon to be married.

By this light the salty fishes  
Arch in the sea like tree-branches,  
Going in many directions  
Up and down.

This light conducts  
The thoughts of drunkards, the feelings  
Of widows and trembling ladies,  
The movements of fishes.

How pleasant an existence it is  
That this emerald charms philosophers,  
Until they become thoughtlessly willing  
To bathe their hearts in later moonlight,

Knowing that they can bring back thought  
In the night that is still to be silent,  
Reflecting this thing and that,  
Before they sleep!

It is better that, as scholars,  
They should think hard in the dark cuffs  
Of voluminous cloaks,  
And shave their heads and bodies.

It might well be that their mistress  
Is no gaunt fugitive phantom.  
She might, after all, be a wanton,  
Abundantly beautiful, eager,

Fecund,  
From whose being by starlight, on sea-coast,  
The innermost good of their seeking  
Might come in the simplest of speech.

It is a good light, then, for those  
That know the ultimate Plato,  
Tranquillizing with this jewel  
The torments of confusion.

## The Comedian As the Letter C



# I

## The World without Imagination

Nota: man is the intelligence of his soil,  
The sovereign ghost. As such, the Socrates  
Of snails, musician of pears, principium  
And lex. Sed quaeritur: is this same wig  
Of things, this nincompanied pedagogue,  
Preceptor to the sea? Crispin at sea  
Created, in his day, a touch of doubt.  
An eye most apt in gelatines and jupes,  
Berries of villages, a barber's eye,  
An eye of land, of simple salad-beds,  
Of honest quilts, the eye of Crispin, hung  
On porpoises, instead of apricots,  
And on silentious porpoises, whose snouts  
Dibbled in waves that were mustachios,  
Inscrutable hair in an inscrutable world.

One eats one paté, even of salt, quotha.  
It was not so much the lost terrestrial,  
The snug hibernal from that sea and salt,  
That century of wind in a single puff.  
What counted was mythology of self,  
Blotched out beyond unblotching. Crispin,  
The lutanist of fleas, the knave, the thane,  
The ribboned stick, the bellowing breeches, cloak

Of China, cap of Spain, imperative haw  
Of hum, inquisitorial botanist,  
And general lexicographer of mute  
And maidenly greenhorns, now beheld himself,  
A skinny sailor peering in the sea-glass.  
What word split up in clickering syllables  
And storming under multitudinous tones  
Was name for this short-shanks in all that brunt?  
Crispin was washed away by magnitude.  
The whole of life that still remained in him  
Dwindled to one sound strumming in his ear,  
Ubiquitous concussion, slap and sigh,  
Polyphony beyond his baton's thrust.

Could Crispin stem verboseness in the sea,  
The old age of a watery realist,  
Triton, dissolved in shifting diaphanes  
Of blue and green? A wordy, watery age  
That whispered to the sun's compassion, made  
A convocation, nightly, of the sea-stars,  
And on the clopping foot-ways of the moon  
Lay grovelling. Triton incomplicate with that  
Which made him Triton, nothing left of him,  
Except in faint, memorial gesturings,  
That were like arms and shoulders in the waves,  
Here, something in the rise and fall of wind  
That seemed hallucinating horn, and here,  
A sunken voice, both of remembering  
And of forgetfulness, in alternate strain.  
Just so an ancient Crispin was dissolved.  
The valet in the tempest was annulled.  
Bordeaux to Yucatan, Havana next,  
And then to Carolina. Simple jaunt.  
Crispin, merest minuscule in the gales,

Dejected his manner to the turbulence.  
The salt hung on his spirit like a frost,  
The dead brine melted in him like a dew  
Of winter, until nothing of himself  
Remained, except some starker, barer self  
In a starker, barer world, in which the sun  
Was not the sun because it never shone  
With bland complaisance on pale parasols,  
Beetled, in chapels, on the chaste bouquets.  
Against his piping sounds a trumpet cried  
Celestial sneering boisterously. Crispin  
Became an introspective voyager.

Here was the veritable ding an sich, at last,  
Crispin confronting it, a vocable thing,  
But with a speech belched out of hoary darks  
Noway resembling his, a visible thing,  
And excepting negligible Triton, free  
From the unavoidable shadow of himself  
That lay elsewhere around him. Severance  
Was clear. The last distortion of romance  
Forsook the insatiable egotist. The sea  
Severs not only lands but also selves.  
Here was no help before reality.  
Crispin beheld and Crispin was made new.  
The imagination, here, could not evade,  
In poems of plums, the strict austerity  
Of one vast, subjugating, final tone.  
The drenching of stale lives no more fell down.  
What was this gaudy, gusty panoply?  
Out of what swift destruction did it spring?  
It was caparison of wind and cloud  
And something given to make whole among  
The ruses that were shattered by the large.

## II

### Concerning the Thunderstorms of Yucatan

In Yucatan, the Maya sonneteers  
Of the Caribbean amphitheatre,  
In spite of hawk and falcon, green toucan  
And jay, still to the night-bird made their plea,  
As if raspberry tanagers in palms,  
High up in orange air, were barbarous.  
But Crispin was too destitute to find  
In any commonplace the sought-for aid.  
He was a man made vivid by the sea,  
A man come out of luminous traversing,  
Much trumpeted, made desperately clear,  
Fresh from discoveries of tidal skies,  
To whom oracular rockings gave no rest.  
Into a savage color he went on.

How greatly had he grown in his demesne,  
This auditor of insects! He that saw  
The stride of vanishing autumn in a park  
By way of decorous melancholy; he  
That wrote his couplet yearly to the spring,  
As dissertation of profound delight,  
Stopping, on voyage, in a land of snakes,  
Found his vicissitudes had much enlarged  
His apprehension, made him intricate

In moody rucks, and difficult and strange  
In all desires, his destitution's mark.  
He was in this as other freemen are,  
Sonorous nutshells rattling inwardly.  
His violence was for aggrandizement  
And not for stupor, such as music makes  
For sleepers halfway waking. He perceived  
That coolness for his heat came suddenly,  
And only, in the fables that he scrawled  
With his own quill, in its indigenous dew,  
Of an aesthetic tough, diverse, untamed,  
Incredible to prudes, the mint of dirt,  
Green barbarism turning paradigm.  
Crispin foresaw a curious promenade  
Or, nobler, sensed an elemental fate,  
And elemental potencies and pangs,  
And beautiful barenesses as yet unseen,  
Making the most of savagery of palms,  
Of moonlight on the thick, cadaverous bloom  
That yuccas breed, and of the panther's tread.  
The fabulous and its intrinsic verse  
Came like two spirits parleying, adorned  
In radiance from the Atlantic coign,  
For Crispin and his quill to catechize.  
But they came parleying of such an earth,  
So thick with sides and jagged lops of green,  
So intertwined with serpent-kin encoiled  
Among the purple tufts, the scarlet crowns,  
Scenting the jungle in their refuges,  
So streaked with yellow, blue and green and red  
In beak and bud and fruity gobbet-skins,  
That earth was like a jostling festival  
Of seeds grown fat, too juicily opulent,  
Expanding in the gold's maternal warmth.

So much for that. The affectionate emigrant found  
A new reality in parrot-squawks.  
Yet let that trifle pass. Now, as this odd  
Discoverer walked through the harbor streets  
Inspecting the cabildo, the façade  
Of the cathedral, making notes, he heard  
A rumbling, west of Mexico, it seemed,  
Approaching like a gasconade of drums.  
The white cabildo darkened, the façade,  
As sullen as the sky, was swallowed up  
In swift, successive shadows, dolefully.  
The rumbling broadened as it fell. The wind,  
Tempestuous clarion, with heavy cry,  
Came bluntly thundering, more terrible  
Than the revenge of music on bassoons.  
Gesticulating lightning, mystical,  
Made pallid flitter. Crispin, here, took flight.  
An annotator has his scruples, too.  
He knelt in the cathedral with the rest,  
This connoisseur of elemental fate,  
Aware of exquisite thought. The storm was one  
Of many proclamations of the kind,  
Proclaiming something harsher than he learned  
From hearing signboards whimper in cold nights  
Or seeing the midsummer artifice  
Of heat upon his pane. This was the span  
Of force, the quintessential fact, the note  
Of Vulcan, that a valet seeks to own,  
The thing that makes him envious in phrase.

And while the torrent on the roof still droned  
He felt the Andean breath. His mind was free  
And more than free, elate, intent, profound

And studious of a self possessing him,  
That was not in him in the crusty town  
From which he sailed. Beyond him, westward, lay  
The mountainous ridges, purple balustrades,  
In which the thunder, lapsing in its clap,  
Let down gigantic quavers of its voice,  
For Crispin to vociferate again.

### III

## Approaching Carolina

The book of moonlight is not written yet  
Nor half begun, but, when it is, leave room  
For Crispin, fagot in the lunar fire,  
Who, in the hubbub of his pilgrimage  
Through sweating changes, never could forget  
That wakefulness or meditating sleep,  
In which the sulky strophes willingly  
Bore up, in time, the somnolent, deep songs.  
Leave room, therefore, in that unwritten book  
For the legendary moonlight that once burned  
In Crispin's mind above a continent.  
America was always north to him,  
A northern west or western north, but north,  
And thereby polar, polar-purple, chilled  
And lank, rising and slumping from a sea  
Of hardy foam, receding flatly, spread  
In endless ledges, glittering, submerged  
And cold in a boreal mistiness of the moon.  
The spring came there in clinking pannicles  
Of half-dissolving frost, the summer came,  
If ever, whisked and wet, not ripening,  
Before the winter's vacancy returned.  
The myrtle, if the myrtle ever bloomed,  
Was like a glacial pink upon the air.

The green palmettoes in crepuscular ice  
Clipped frigidly blue-black meridians,  
Morose chiaroscuro, gauntly drawn.

How many poems he denied himself  
In his observant progress, lesser things  
Than the relentless contact he desired;  
How many sea-masks he ignored; what sounds  
He shut out from his tempering ear; what thoughts,  
Like jades affecting the sequestered bride;  
And what descants, he sent to banishment!  
Perhaps the Arctic moonlight really gave  
The liaison, the blissful liaison,  
Between himself and his environment,  
Which was, and is, chief motive, first delight,  
For him, and not for him alone. It seemed  
Illusive, faint, more mist than moon, perverse,  
Wrong as a divagation to Peking,  
To him that postulated as his theme  
The vulgar, as his theme and hymn and flight,  
A passionately niggling nightingale.  
Moonlight was an evasion, or, if not,  
A minor meeting, facile, delicate.

Thus he conceived his voyaging to be  
An up and down between two elements,  
A fluctuating between sun and moon,  
A sally into gold and crimson forms,  
As on this voyage, out of goblinry,  
And then retirement like a turning back  
And sinking down to the indulgences  
That in the moonlight have their habitude.  
But let these backward lapses, if they would,  
Grind their seductions on him, Crispin knew

It was a flourishing tropic he required  
For his refreshment, an abundant zone,  
Prickly and obdurate, dense, harmonious  
Yet with a harmony not rarefied  
Nor fined for the inhibited instruments  
Of over-civil stops. And thus he tossed  
Between a Carolina of old time,  
A little juvenile, an ancient whim,  
And the visible, circumspect presentment drawn  
From what he saw across his vessel's prow.

He came. The poetic hero without palms  
Or jugglery, without regalia.  
And as he came he saw that it was spring,  
A time abhorrent to the nihilist  
Or searcher for the fecund minimum.  
The moonlight fiction disappeared. The spring,  
Although contending feately in its veils,  
Irised in dew and early fragrances,  
Was gemmy marionette to him that sought  
A sinewy nakedness. A river bore  
The vessel inward. Tilting up his nose,  
He inhaled the rancid rosin, burly smells  
Of dampened lumber, emanations blown  
From warehouse doors, the gustiness of ropes,  
Decays of sacks, and all the arrant stinks  
That helped him round his rude aesthetic out.  
He savored rankness like a sensualist.  
He marked the marshy ground around the dock,  
The crawling railroad spur, the rotten fence,  
Curriculum for the marvellous sophomore.  
It purified. It made him see how much  
Of what he saw he never saw at all.

He gripped more closely the essential prose  
As being, in a world so falsified,  
The one integrity for him, the one  
Discovery still possible to make,  
To which all poems were incident, unless  
That prose should wear a poem's guise at last.

## IV

### The Idea of a Colony

Nota: his soil is man's intelligence.  
That's better. That's worth crossing seas to find.  
Crispin in one laconic phrase laid bare  
His cloudy drift and planned a colony.  
Exit the mental moonlight, exit lex,  
Rex and principium, exit the whole  
Shebang. Exeunt omnes. Here was prose  
More exquisite than any tumbling verse:  
A still new continent in which to dwell.  
What was the purpose of his pilgrimage,  
Whatever shape it took in Crispin's mind,  
If not, when all is said, to drive away  
The shadow of his fellows from the skies,  
And, from their stale intelligence released,  
To make a new intelligence prevail?  
Hence the reverberations in the words  
Of his first central hymns, the celebrants  
Of rankest trivia, tests of the strength  
Of his aesthetic, his philosophy,  
The more invidious, the more desired.  
The florist asking aid from cabbages,  
The rich man going bare, the paladin  
Afraid, the blind man as astronomer,  
The appointed power unwielded from disdain.

His western voyage ended and began.  
The torment of fastidious thought grew slack,  
Another, still more bellicose, came on.  
He, therefore, wrote his prolegomena,  
And, being full of the caprice, inscribed  
Commingled souvenirs and prophecies.  
He made a singular collation. Thus:  
The natives of the rain are rainy men.  
Although they paint effulgent, azure lakes,  
And April hillsides wooded white and pink,  
Their azure has a cloudy edge, their white  
And pink, the water bright that dogwood bears.  
And in their music showering sounds intone.  
On what strange froth does the gross Indian dote,  
What Eden sapling gum, what honeyed gore,  
What pulpy dram distilled of innocence,  
That streaking gold should speak in him  
Or bask within his images and words?  
If these rude instances impeach themselves  
By force of rudeness, let the principle  
Be plain. For application Crispin strove,  
Abhorring Turk as Esquimau, the lute  
As the marimba, the magnolia as rose.

Upon these premises propounding, he  
Projected a colony that should extend  
To the dusk of a whistling south below the south,  
A comprehensive island hemisphere.  
The man in Georgia waking among pines  
Should be pine-spokesman. The responsive man,  
Planting his pristine cores in Florida,  
Should prick thereof, not on the psaltery,  
But on the banjo's categorical gut,

Tuck tuck, while the flamingos flapped his bays.  
Sepulchral señors, bibbing pale mescal,  
Oblivious to the Aztec almanacs,  
Should make the intricate Sierra scan.  
And dark Brazilians in their cafés,  
Musing immaculate, pampean dits,  
Should scrawl a vigilant anthology,  
To be their latest, lucent paramour.  
These are the broadest instances. Crispin,  
Progenitor of such extensive scope,  
Was not indifferent to smart detail.  
The melon should have apposite ritual,  
Performed in verd apparel, and the peach,  
When its black branches came to bud, belle day,  
Should have an incantation. And again,  
When piled on salvers its aroma steeped  
The summer, it should have a sacrament  
And celebration. Shrewd novitiates  
Should be the clerks of our experience.

These bland excursions into time to come,  
Related in romance to backward flights,  
However prodigal, however proud,  
Contained in their afflatus the reproach  
That first drove Crispin to his wandering.  
He could not be content with counterfeit,  
With masquerade of thought, with hapless words  
That must belie the racking masquerade,  
With fictive flourishes that preordained  
His passion's permit, hang of coat, degree  
Of buttons, measure of his salt. Such trash  
Might help the blind, not him, serenely sly.  
It irked beyond his patience. Hence it was,

Preferring text to gloss, he humbly served  
Grotesque apprenticeship to chance event,  
A clown, perhaps, but an aspiring clown.  
There is a monotonous babbling in our dreams  
That makes them our dependent heirs, the heirs  
Of dreamers buried in our sleep, and not  
The oncoming fantasies of better birth.  
The apprentice knew these dreamers. If he dreamed  
Their dreams, he did it in a gingerly way.  
All dreams are vexing. Let them be expunged.  
But let the rabbit run, the cock declaim.

Trinket pasticcio, flaunting skyey sheets,  
With Crispin as the tiptoe cozener?  
No, no: veracious page on page, exact.

# V

## A Nice Shady Home

Crispin as hermit, pure and capable,  
Dwelt in the land. Perhaps if discontent  
Had kept him still the pricking realist,  
Choosing his element from droll confect  
Of was and is and shall or ought to be,  
Beyond Bordeaux, beyond Havana, far  
Beyond carked Yucatan, he might have come  
To colonize his polar planterdom  
And jig his chits upon a cloudy knee.  
But his emprise to that idea soon sped.  
Crispin dwelt in the land and dwelling there  
Slid from his continent by slow recess  
To things within his actual eye, alert  
To the difficulty of rebellious thought  
When the sky is blue. The blue infected will.  
It may be that the yarrow in his fields  
Sealed pensive purple under its concern.  
But day by day, now this thing and now that  
Confined him, while it cosseted, condoned,  
Little by little, as if the suzerain soil  
Abashed him by carouse to humble yet  
Attach. It seemed haphazard denouement.  
He first, as realist, admitted that  
Whoever hunts a matinal continent

May, after all, stop short before a plum  
And be content and still be realist.  
The words of things entangle and confuse.  
The plum survives its poems. It may hang  
In the sunshine placidly, colored by ground  
Obliquities of those who pass beneath,  
Harlequined and mazily dewed and mauved  
In bloom. Yet it survives in its own form,  
Beyond these changes, good, fat, guzzly fruit.  
So Crispin hasped on the surviving form,  
For him, of shall or ought to be in is.

Was he to bray this in profoundest brass  
Arointing his dreams with fugal requiems?  
Was he to company vastest things defunct  
With a blubber of tom-toms harrowing the sky?  
Scrawl a tragedian's testament? Prolong  
His active force in an inactive dirge,  
Which, let the tall musicians call and call,  
Should merely call him dead? Pronounce amen  
Through choirs infolded to the outmost clouds?  
Because he built a cabin who once planned  
Loquacious columns by the ructive sea?  
Because he turned to salad-beds again?  
Jovial Crispin, in calamitous crape?  
Should he lay by the personal and make  
Of his own fate an instance of all fate?  
What is one man among so many men?  
What are so many men in such a world?  
Can one man think one thing and think it long?  
Can one man be one thing and be it long?  
The very man despising honest quilts  
Lies quilted to his poll in his despite.  
For realists, what is is what should be.

And so it came, his cabin shuffled up,  
His trees were planted, his duenna brought  
Her prismatic blonde and clapped her in his hands,  
The curtains fluttered and the door was closed.  
Crispin, magister of a single room,  
Latched up the night. So deep a sound fell down  
It was as if the solitude concealed  
And covered him and his congenial sleep.  
So deep a sound fell down it grew to be  
A long soothsaying silence down and down.  
The crickets beat their tambours in the wind,  
Marching a motionless march, custodians.

In the presto of the morning, Crispin trod,  
Each day, still curious, but in a round  
Less prickly and much more condign than that  
He once thought necessary. Like Candide,  
Yeoman and grub, but with a fig in sight,  
And cream for the fig and silver for the cream,  
A blonde to tip the silver and to taste  
The rapey gouts. Good star, how that to be  
Annealed them in their cabin ribaldries!  
Yet the quotidian saps philosophers  
And men like Crispin like them in intent,  
If not in will, to track the knaves of thought.  
But the quotidian composed as his,  
Of breakfast ribands, fruits laid in their leaves,  
The tomtit and the cassia and the rose,  
Although the rose was not the noble thorn  
Of crinoline spread, but of a pining sweet,  
Composed of evenings like cracked shutters flung  
Upon the rumpling bottomness, and nights  
In which those frail custodians watched,  
Indifferent to the tepid summer cold,

While he poured out upon the lips of her  
That lay beside him, the quotidian  
Like this, saps like the sun, true fortuner.  
For all it takes it gives a humped return  
Exchequering from piebald fiscs unkeyed.

## VI

### And Daughters with Curls

Portentous enunciation, syllable  
To blessed syllable affined, and sound  
Bubbling felicity in cantilene,  
Prolific and tormenting tenderness  
Of music, as it comes to unison,  
Forgather and bell boldly Crispin's last  
Deduction. Thrum with a proud douceur  
His grand pronunciamento and devise.

The chits came for his jigging, bluet-eyed,  
Hands without touch yet touching poignantly,  
Leaving no room upon his cloudy knee,  
Prophetic joint, for its diviner young.  
The return to social nature, once begun,  
Anabasis or slump, ascent or chute,  
Involved him in midwifery so dense  
His cabin counted as philactery,  
Then place of vexing palankeens, then haunt  
Of children nibbling at the sugared void,  
Infants yet eminently old, then dome  
And halidom for the unbraided femes,  
Green crammers of the green fruits of the world,  
Bidders and biders for its ecstasies,  
True daughters both of Crispin and his clay.

All this with many mulctings of the man,  
Effective colonizer sharply stopped  
In the door-yard by his own capacious bloom.  
But that this bloom grown riper, showing nibs  
Of its eventual roundness, puerile tints  
Of spiced and weathery rouges, should complex  
The stopper to indulgent fatalist  
Was unforeseen. First Crispin smiled upon  
His goldenest demoiselle, inhabitant,  
She seemed, of a country of the capuchins,  
So delicately blushed, so humbly eyed,  
Attentive to a coronal of things  
Secret and singular. Second, upon  
A second similar counterpart, a maid  
Most sisterly to the first, not yet awake  
Excepting to the motherly footstep, but  
Marvelling sometimes at the shaken sleep.  
Then third, a thing still flaxen in the light,  
A creeper under jaunty leaves. And fourth,  
Mere blusteriness that gewgaws jollified,  
All din and gobble, blasphemously pink.  
A few years more and the vermeil capuchin  
Gave to the cabin, lordlier than it was,  
The dulcet omen fit for such a house.  
The second sister dallying was shy  
To fetch the one full-pinioned one himself  
Out of her botches, hot embosomer.  
The third one gaping at the orioles  
Lettered herself demurely as became  
A pearly poetess, peaked for rhapsody.  
The fourth, pent now, a digit curious.  
Four daughters in a world too intricate  
In the beginning, four blithe instruments  
Of differing struts, four voices several

In couch, four more personæ, intimate  
As buffo, yet divers, four mirrors blue  
That should be silver, four accustomed seeds  
Hinting incredible hues, four self-same lights  
That spread chromatics in hilarious dark,  
Four questioners and four sure answerers.

Crispin concocted doctrine from the rout.  
The world, a turnip once so readily plucked,  
Sacked up and carried overseas, daubed out  
Of its ancient purple, pruned to the fertile main,  
And sown again by the stiffest realist,  
Came reproduced in purple, family font,  
The same insoluble lump. The fatalist  
Stepped in and dropped the chuckling down his craw,  
Without grace or grumble. Score this anecdote  
Invented for its pith, not doctrinal  
In form though in design, as Crispin willed,  
Disguised pronunciamento, summary,  
Autumn's compendium, strident in itself  
But muted, mused, and perfectly revolved  
In those portentous accents, syllables,  
And sounds of music coming to accord  
Upon his law, like their inherent sphere,  
Seraphic proclamations of the pure  
Delivered with a deluging onwardness.  
Or if the music sticks, if the anecdote  
Is false, if Crispin is a profitless  
Philosopher, beginning with green brag,  
Concluding fadedly, if as a man  
Prone to distemper he abates in taste,  
Fickle and fumbling, variable, obscure,  
Glozing his life with after-shining flicks,  
Illuminating, from a fancy gorged

By apparition, plain and common things,  
Sequestering the fluster from the year,  
Making gulped potions from obstreperous drops,  
And so distorting, proving what he proves  
Is nothing, what can all this matter since  
The relation comes, benignly, to its end?

So may the relation of each man be clipped.

## From the Misery of Don Joost

I have finished my combat with the sun;  
And my body, the old animal,  
Knows nothing more.

The powerful seasons bred and killed,  
And were themselves the genii  
Of their own ends.

Oh, but the very self of the storm  
Of sun and slaves, breeding and death,  
The old animal,

The senses and feeling, the very sound  
And sight, and all there was of the storm,  
Knows nothing more.

## O, Florida, Venereal Soil

A few things for themselves,  
Convolvulus and coral,  
Buzzards and live-moss,  
Tiestas from the keys,  
A few things for themselves,  
Florida, venereal soil,  
Disclose to the lover.

The dreadful sundry of this world,  
The Cuban, Polodowsky,  
The Mexican women,  
The negro undertaker  
Killing the time between corpses  
Fishing for crayfish . . .  
Virgin of boorish births,

Swiftly in the nights,  
In the porches of Key West,  
Behind the bougainvilleas,  
After the guitar is asleep,  
Lasciviously as the wind,  
You come tormenting,  
Insatiable,

When you might sit,  
A scholar of darkness,

Sequestered over the sea,  
Wearing a clear tiara  
Of red and blue and red,  
Sparkling, solitary, still,  
In the high sea-shadow.

Donna, donna, dark,  
Stooping in indigo gown  
And cloudy constellations,  
Conceal yourself or disclose  
Fewest things to the lover—  
A hand that bears a thick-leaved fruit,  
A pungent bloom against your shade.

## Last Looks at the Lilacs

To what good, in the alleys of the lilacs,  
O caliper, do you scratch your buttocks  
And tell the divine ingénue, your companion,  
That this bloom is the bloom of soap  
And this fragrance the fragrance of vegetal?

Do you suppose that she cares a tick,  
In this hymeneal air, what it is  
That marries her innocence thus,  
So that her nakedness is near,  
Or that she will pause at scurrilous words?

Poor buffo! Look at the lavender  
And look your last and look still steadily,  
And say how it comes that you see  
Nothing but trash and that you no longer feel  
Her body quivering in the Floréal

Toward the cool night and its fantastic star,  
Prime paramour and belted paragon,  
Well-booted, rugged, arrogantly male,  
Patron and imager of the gold Don John,  
Who will embrace her before summer comes.

## The Worms at Heaven's Gate

Out of the tomb, we bring Badroulbadour,  
Within our bellies, we her chariot.  
Here is an eye. And here are, one by one,  
The lashes of that eye and its white lid.  
Here is the cheek on which that lid declined,  
And, finger after finger, here, the hand,  
The genius of that cheek. Here are the lips,  
The bundle of the body and the feet.

. . . . .

Out of the tomb we bring Badroulbadour.

## The Jack-Rabbit

In the morning,  
The jack-rabbit sang to the Arkansaw.  
He caroled in caracoles  
On thefeat sandbars.

The black man said,  
"Now, grandmother,  
Crochet me this buzzard  
On your winding-sheet,  
And do not forget his wry neck  
After the winter."

The black man said,  
"Look out, O caroller,  
The entrails of the buzzard  
Are rattling."

## Valley Candle

My candle burned alone in an immense valley.  
Beams of the huge night converged upon it,  
Until the wind blew.

Then beams of the huge night  
Converged upon its image,  
Until the wind blew.

## Anecdote of Men by the Thousand

The soul, he said, is composed  
Of the external world.

There are men of the East, he said,  
Who are the East.

There are men of a province  
Who are that province

There are men of a valley  
Who are that valley.

There are men whose words  
Are as natural sounds  
Of their places  
As the cackle of toucans  
In the place of toucans.

The mandoline is the instrument  
Of a place.

Are there mandolines of western mountains?  
Are there mandolines of northern moonlight?

The dress of a woman of Lhassa,  
In its place,  
Is an invisible element of that place  
Made visible.

## The Silver Plough-Boy

A black figure dances in a black field.  
It seizes a sheet, from the ground, from a bush, as if spread  
there by some wash-woman for the night.  
It wraps the sheet around its body, until the black figure  
is silver.  
It dances down a furrow, in the early light, back of a crazy  
plough, the green blades following.  
How soon the silver fades in the dust! How soon the black  
figure slips from the wrinkled sheet! How softly the  
sheet falls to the ground!

## The Apostrophe to Vincentine

### I

I figured you as nude between  
Monotonous earth and dark blue sky.  
It made you seem so small and lean  
And nameless,  
Heavenly Vincentine.

### II

I saw you then, as warm as flesh,  
Brunette,  
But yet not too brunette,  
As warm, as clean.  
Your dress was green,  
Was whitened green,  
Green Vincentine.

### III

Then you came walking,  
In a group  
Of human others,  
Voluble.  
Yes: you came walking,  
Vincentine.  
Yes: you came talking.

IV

And what I knew you felt  
Came then.  
Monotonous earth I saw become  
Illimitable spheres of you,  
And that white animal, so lean,  
Turned Vincentine,  
Turned heavenly Vincentine,  
And that white animal, so lean,  
Turned heavenly, heavenly Vincentine.

## Floral Decorations for Bananas

Well, nuncle, this plainly won't do.  
These insolent, linear peels  
And sullen, hurricane shapes  
Won't do with your eglantine.  
They require something serpentine.  
Blunt yellow in such a room!

You should have had plums tonight,  
In an eighteenth-century dish,  
And pettifogging buds,  
For the women of primrose and purl,  
Each one in her decent curl.  
Good God! What a precious light!

But bananas hacked and hunched . . .  
The table was set by an ogre,  
His eye on an outdoor gloom  
And a stiff and noxious place.  
Pile the bananas on planks.  
The women will be all shanks  
And bangles and slatted eyes.

And deck the bananas in leaves  
Plucked from the Carib trees,  
Fibrous and dangling down,

Oozing cantankerous gum  
Out of their purple maws,  
Darting out of their purple crows  
Their musky and tingling tongues.

## Anecdote of Canna

Huge are the canna in the dreams of  
X, the mighty thought, the mighty man.  
They fill the terrace of his capitol.

His thought sleeps not. Yet thought that wakes  
In sleep may never meet another thought  
Or thing. . . . Now day-break comes. . . .

X promenades the dewy stones,  
Observes the canna with a clinging eye,  
Observes and then continues to observe.

## Of the Manner of Addressing Clouds

Gloomy grammarians in golden gowns,  
Meekly you keep the mortal rendezvous,  
Eliciting the still sustaining pomps  
Of speech which are like music so profound  
They seem an exaltation without sound.  
Funest philosophers and ponderers,  
Their evocations are the speech of clouds.  
So speech of your processional returns  
In the casual evocations of your tread  
Across the stale, mysterious seasons. These  
Are the music of meet resignation; these  
The responsive, still sustaining pomps for you  
To magnify, if in that drifting waste  
You are to be accompanied by more  
Than mute bare splendors of the sun and moon.

## Of Heaven Considered as a Tomb

What word have you, interpreters, of men  
Who in the tomb of heaven walk by night,  
The darkened ghosts of our old comedy?  
Do they believe they range the gusty cold,  
With lanterns borne aloft to light the way,  
Freemen of death, about and still about  
To find whatever it is they seek? Or does  
That burial, pillared up each day as porte  
And spiritous passage into nothingness,  
Foretell each night the one abysmal night,  
When the host shall no more wander, nor the light  
Of the steadfast lanterns creep across the dark?  
Make hue among the dark comedians,  
Halloo them in the topmost distances  
For answer from their icy Elysée.

## Of the Surface of Things

### I

In my room, the world is beyond my understanding;  
But when I walk I see that it consists of three or four hills  
and a cloud.

### II

From my balcony, I survey the yellow air,  
Reading where I have written,  
“The spring is like a belle undressing.”

### III

The gold tree is blue.  
The singer has pulled his cloak over his head.  
The moon is in the folds of the cloak.

## Anecdote of the Prince of Peacocks

In the moonlight  
I met Berserk,  
In the moonlight  
On the bushy plain.  
Oh, sharp he was  
As the sleepless!

And, "Why are you red  
In this milky blue?"  
I said.  
"Why sun-colored,  
As if awake  
In the midst of sleep?"

"You that wander,"  
So he said,  
"On the bushy plain,  
Forget so soon.  
But I set my traps  
In the midst of dreams."

I knew from this  
That the blue ground  
Was full of blocks  
And blocking steel.  
I knew the dread  
Of the bushy plain,

And the beauty  
Of the moonlight  
Falling there,  
Falling  
As sleep falls  
In the innocent air.

## A High-Toned Old Christian Woman

Poetry is the supreme fiction, madame.  
Take the moral law and make a nave of it  
And from the nave build haunted heaven. Thus,  
The conscience is converted into palms,  
Like windy citherns hankering for hymns.  
We agree in principle. That's clear. But take  
The opposing law and make a peristyle,  
And from the peristyle project a masque  
Beyond the planets. Thus, our bawdiness,  
Unpurged by epitaph, indulged at last,  
Is equally converted into palms,  
Squiggling like saxophones. And palm for palm,  
Madame, we are where we began. Allow,  
Therefore, that in the planetary scene  
Your disaffected flagellants, well-stuffed,  
Smacking their muzzy bellies in parade,  
Proud of such novelties of the sublime,  
Such tink and tank and tunk-a-tunk-tunk,  
May, merely may, madame, whip from themselves  
A jovial hullabaloo among the spheres.  
This will make widows wince. But fictive things  
Wink as they will. Wink most when widows wince.

## The Place of the Solitaires

Let the place of the solitaires  
Be a place of perpetual undulation.

Whether it be in mid-sea  
On the dark, green water-wheel,  
Or on the beaches,  
There must be no cessation  
Of motion, or of the noise of motion,  
The renewal of noise  
And manifold continuation;

And, most, of the motion of thought  
And its restless iteration,

In the place of the solitaires,  
Which is to be a place of perpetual undulation.

## The Weeping Burgher

It is with a strange malice  
That I distort the world.

Ah! that ill humors  
Should mask as white girls.  
And ah! that Scaramouche  
Should have a black barouche.

The sorry verities!  
Yet in excess, continual,  
There is cure of sorrow.

Permit that if as ghost I come  
Among the people burning in me still,  
I come as belle design  
Of foppish line.

And I, then, tortured for old speech,  
A white of wildly woven rings;  
I, weeping in a calcined heart,  
My hands such sharp, imagined things.

## The Curtains in the House of the Metaphysician

It comes about that the drifting of these curtains  
Is full of long motions; as the ponderous  
Deflations of distance; or as clouds  
Inseparable from their afternoons;  
Or the changing of light, the dropping  
Of the silence, wide sleep and solitude  
Of night, in which all motion  
Is beyond us, as the firmament,  
Up-rising and down-falling, bares  
The last largeness, bold to see.

## Banal Sojourn

Two wooden tubs of blue hydrangeas stand at the foot of the stone steps.

The sky is a blue gum streaked with rose. The trees are black.

The grackles crack their throats of bone in the smooth air. Moisture and heat have swollen the garden into a slum of bloom.

Pardie! Summer is like a fat beast, sleepy in mildew, Our old bane, green and bloated, serene, who cries, "That bliss of stars, that princox of evening heaven!" reminding of seasons,

When radiance came running down, slim through the barenness. And so it is one damns that green shade at the bottom of the land.

For who can care at the wigs despoiling the Satan ear? And who does not seek the sky unfuzzed, soaring to the princox?

One has a malady, here, a malady. One feels a malady.

## Depression before Spring

The cock crows  
But no queen rises.

The hair of my blonde  
Is dazzling,  
As the spittle of cows  
Threading the wind.

Ho! Ho!

But ki-ki-ri-ki  
Brings no rou-cou,  
No rou-cou-cou.

But no queen comes  
In slipper green.

## The Emperor of Ice-Cream

Call the roller of big cigars,  
The muscular one, and bid him whip  
In kitchen cups concupiscent curds.  
Let the wenches dawdle in such dress  
As they are used to wear, and let the boys  
Bring flowers in last month's newspapers.  
Let be be finale of seem.  
The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.

Take from the dresser of deal,  
Lacking the three glass knobs, that sheet  
On which she embroidered fantails once  
And spread it so as to cover her face.  
If her horny feet protrude, they come  
To show how cold she is, and dumb.  
Let the lamp affix its beam.  
The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.

## The Cuban Doctor

I went to Egypt to escape  
The Indian, but the Indian struck  
Out of his cloud and from his sky.

This was no worm bred in the moon,  
Wriggling far down the phantom air,  
And on a comfortable sofa dreamed.

The Indian struck and disappeared.  
I knew my enemy was near—I,  
Drowsing in summer's sleepiest horn.

## Tea at the Palaz of Hoon

Not less because in purple I descended  
The western day through what you called  
The loneliest air, not less was I myself.

What was the ointment sprinkled on my beard?  
What were the hymns that buzzed beside my ears?  
What was the sea whose tide swept through me there?

Out of my mind the golden ointment rained,  
And my ears made the blowing hymns they heard.  
I was myself the compass of that sea:

I was the world in which I walked, and what I saw  
Or heard or felt came not but from myself;  
And there I found myself more truly and more strange.

## Exposition of the Contents of a Cab

Victoria Clementina, negress,  
Took seven white dogs  
To ride in a cab.

Bells of the dogs chinked.  
Harness of the horses shuffled  
Like brazen shells.

Oh-hé-hé! Fragrant puppets  
By the green lake-pallors,  
She too is flesh,  
And a breech-cloth might wear,  
Netted of topaz and ruby  
And savage blooms;

Thridding the squawkiest jungle  
In a golden sedan,  
White dogs at bay.

What breech-cloth might you wear,  
Except linen, embroidered  
By elderly women?

## Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock

The houses are haunted  
By white night-gowns.  
None are green,  
Or purple with green rings,  
Or green with yellow rings,  
Or yellow with blue rings.  
None of them are strange,  
With socks of lace  
And beaded ceintures.  
People are not going  
To dream of baboons and periwinkles.  
Only, here and there, an old sailor,  
Drunk and asleep in his boots,  
Catches tigers  
In red weather.

## Sunday Morning

### I

Complacencies of the peignoir, and late  
Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair,  
And the green freedom of a cockatoo  
Upon a rug mingle to dissipate  
The holy hush of ancient sacrifice.  
She dreams a little, and she feels the dark  
Encroachment of that old catastrophe,  
As a calm darkens among water-lights.  
The pungent oranges and bright, green wings  
Seem things in some procession of the dead,  
Winding across wide water, without sound.  
The day is like wide water, without sound,  
Stilled for the passing of her dreaming feet  
Over the seas, to silent Palestine,  
Dominion of the blood and sepulchre.

### II

Why should she give her bounty to the dead?  
What is divinity if it can come  
Only in silent shadows and in dreams?  
Shall she not find in comforts of the sun,  
In pungent fruit and bright, green wings, or else  
In any balm or beauty of the earth,

Things to be cherished like the thought of heaven?  
Divinity must live within herself:  
Passions of rain, or moods in falling snow;  
Griefs in loneliness, or unsubdued  
Elations when the forest blooms; gusty  
Emotions on wet roads on autumn nights;  
All pleasures and all pains, remembering  
The bough of summer and the winter branch.  
These are the measures destined for her soul.

### III

Jove in the clouds had his inhuman birth.  
No mother suckled him, no sweet land gave  
Large-mannered motions to his mythy mind.  
He moved among us, as a muttering king,  
Magnificent, would move among his hinds,  
Until our blood, commingling, virginal,  
With heaven, brought such requital to desire  
The very hinds discerned it, in a star.  
Shall our blood fail? Or shall it come to be  
The blood of paradise? And shall the earth  
Seem all of paradise that we shall know?  
The sky will be much friendlier then than now,  
A part of labor and a part of pain,  
And next in glory to enduring love,  
Not this dividing and indifferent blue.

### IV

She says, "I am content when wakened birds,  
Before they fly, test the reality  
Of misty fields, by their sweet questionings;  
But when the birds are gone, and their warm fields

Return no more, where, then, is paradise?"  
There is not any haunt of prophesy,  
Nor any old chimera of the grave,  
Neither the golden underground, nor isle  
Melodious, where spirits gat them home,  
Nor visionary south, nor cloudy palm  
Remote on heaven's hill, that has endured  
As April's green endures; or will endure  
Like her remembrance of awakened birds,  
Or her desire for June and evening, tipped  
By the consummation of the swallow's wings.

## V

She says, "But in contentment I still feel  
The need of some imperishable bliss."  
Death is the mother of beauty; hence from her,  
Alone, shall come fulfilment to our dreams  
And our desires. Although she strews the leaves  
Of sure obliteration on our paths,  
The path sick sorrow took, the many paths  
Where triumph rang its brassy phrase, or love  
Whispered a little out of tenderness,  
She makes the willow shiver in the sun  
For maidens who were wont to sit and gaze  
Upon the grass, relinquished to their feet.  
She causes boys to pile new plums and pears  
On disregarded plate. The maidens taste  
And stray impassioned in the littering leaves.

## VI

Is there no change of death in paradise?  
Does ripe fruit never fall? Or do the boughs  
Hang always heavy in that perfect sky,

Unchanging, yet so like our perishing earth,  
With rivers like our own that seek for seas  
They never find, the same receding shores  
That never touch with inarticulate pang?  
Why set the pear upon those river-banks  
Or spice the shores with odors of the plum?  
Alas, that they should wear our colors there,  
The silken weavings of our afternoons,  
And pick the strings of our insipid lutes!  
Death is the mother of beauty, mystical,  
Within whose burning bosom we devise  
Our earthly mothers waiting, sleeplessly.

## VII

Supple and turbulent, a ring of men  
Shall chant in orgy on a summer morn  
Their boisterous devotion to the sun,  
Not as a god, but as a god might be,  
Naked among them, like a savage source.  
Their chant shall be a chant of paradise,  
Out of their blood, returning to the sky;  
And in their chant shall enter, voice by voice,  
The windy lake wherein their lord delights,  
The trees, like serafin, and echoing hills,  
That choir among themselves long afterward.  
They shall know well the heavenly fellowship  
Of men that perish and of summer morn.  
And whence they came and whither they shall go  
The dew upon their feet shall manifest.

## VIII

She hears, upon that water without sound,  
A voice that cries, "The tomb in Palestine

Is not the porch of spirits lingering.  
It is the grave of Jesus, where he lay.”  
We live in an old chaos of the sun,  
Or old dependency of day and night,  
Or island solitude, unsponsored, free,  
Of that wide water, inescapable.

Deer walk upon our mountains, and the quail  
Whistle about us their spontaneous cries;  
Sweet berries ripen in the wilderness;  
And, in the isolation of the sky,  
At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make  
Ambiguous undulations as they sink,  
Downward to darkness, on extended wings.

## The Virgin Carrying a Lantern

There are no bears among the roses,  
Only a negress who supposes  
Things false and wrong

About the lantern of the beauty  
Who walks, there, as a farewell duty,  
Walks long and long.

The pity that her pious egress  
Should fill the vigil of a negress  
With heat so strong!

## Stars at Tallapoosa

The lines are straight and swift between the stars.  
The night is not the cradle that they cry,  
The criers, undulating the deep-oceaned phrase.  
The lines are much too dark and much too sharp.

The mind herein attains simplicity,  
There is no moon, no single, silvered leaf.  
The body is no body to be seen  
But is an eye that studies its black lid.

Let these be your delight, secretive hunter,  
Wading the sea-lines, moist and ever-mingling,  
Mounting the earth-lines, long and lax, lethargic.  
These lines are swift and fall without diverging.

The melon-flower nor dew nor web of either  
Is like to these. But in yourself is like:  
A sheaf of brilliant arrows flying straight,  
Flying and falling straightway for their pleasure,

Their pleasure that is all bright-edged and cold;  
Or, if not arrows, then the nimblest motions,  
Making recoveries of young nakedness  
And the lost vehemence the midnights hold.

## Explanation

Ach, Mutter,  
This old, black dress,  
I have been embroidering  
French flowers on it.

Not by way of romance,  
Here is nothing of the ideal,  
Nein,  
Nein.

It would have been different,  
Liebchen,  
If I had imagined myself,  
In an orange gown,  
Drifting through space,  
Like a figure on the church-wall.

## Six Significant Landscapes

### I

An old man sits  
In the shadow of a pine tree  
In China.  
He sees larkspur,  
Blue and white,  
At the edge of the shadow,  
Move in the wind.  
His beard moves in the wind.  
The pine tree moves in the wind.  
Thus water flows  
Over weeds.

### II

The night is of the color  
Of a woman's arm:  
Night, the female,  
Obscure,  
Fragrant and supple,  
Conceals herself.  
A pool shines,  
Like a bracelet  
Shaken in a dance.

### III

I measure myself  
Against a tall tree.  
I find that I am much taller,  
For I reach right up to the sun,  
With my eye;  
And I reach to the shore of the sea  
With my ear.  
Nevertheless, I dislike  
The way the ants crawl  
In and out of my shadow.

### IV

When my dream was near the moon,  
The white folds of its gown  
Filled with yellow light.  
The soles of its feet  
Grew red.  
Its hair filled  
With certain blue crystallizations  
From stars,  
Not far off.

### V

Not all the knives of the lamp-posts,  
Nor the chisels of the long streets,  
Nor the mallets of the domes  
And high towers,  
Can carve  
What one star can carve,  
Shining through the grape-leaves.

## VI

Rationalists, wearing square hats,  
Think, in square rooms,  
Looking at the floor,  
Looking at the ceiling.  
They confine themselves  
To right-angled triangles.  
If they tried rhomboids,  
Cones, waving lines, ellipses—  
As for example, the ellipse of the half-moon—  
Rationalists would wear sombreros.

## Bantams in Pine-Woods

Chieftain Iffucan of Azcan in caftan  
Of tan with henna hackles, halt!

Damned universal cock, as if the sun  
Was blackamoor to bear your blazing tail.

Fat! Fat! Fat! Fat! I am the personal.  
Your world is you. I am my world.

You ten-foot poet among inchlings. Fat!  
Begone! An inchling bristles in these pines,

Bristles, and points their Appalachian tangs,  
And fears not portly Azcan nor his hoos.

## Anecdote of the Jar

I placed a jar in Tennessee,  
And round it was, upon a hill.  
It made the slovenly wilderness  
Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,  
And sprawled around, no longer wild.  
The jar was round upon the ground  
And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.  
The jar was gray and bare.  
It did not give of bird or bush,  
Like nothing else in Tennessee.

## Palace of the Babies

The disbeliever walked the moonlit place,  
Outside of gates of hammered serafin,  
Observing the moon-blotches on the walls.

The yellow rocked across the still façades,  
Or else sat spinning on the pinnacles,  
While he imagined humming sounds and sleep.

The walker in the moonlight walked alone,  
And each blank window of the building balked  
His loneliness and what was in his mind:

If in a shimmering room the babies came,  
Drawn close by dreams of fledgling wing,  
It was because night nursed them in its fold.

Night nursed not him in whose dark mind  
The clambering wings of birds of black revolved,  
Making harsh torment of the solitude.

The walker in the moonlight walked alone,  
And in his heart his disbelief lay cold.  
His broad-brimmed hat came close upon his eyes.

Frogs Eat Butterflies. Snakes Eat  
Frogs. Hogs Eat Snakes.  
Men Eat Hogs

It is true that the rivers went nosing like swine,  
Tugging at banks, until they seemed  
Bland belly-sounds in somnolent troughs,

That the air was heavy with the breath of these swine,  
The breath of turgid summer, and  
Heavy with thunder's rattapallax,

That the man who erected this cabin, planted  
This field, and tended it awhile,  
Knew not the quirks of imagery,

That the hours of his indolent, arid days,  
Grotesque with this nosing in banks,  
This somnolence and rattapallax,

Seemed to suckle themselves on his arid being,  
As the swine-like rivers suckled themselves  
While they went seaward to the sea-mouths.

## Jasmine's Beautiful Thoughts Underneath the Willow

My titillations have no foot-notes  
And their memorials are the phrases  
Of idiosyncratic music.

The love that will not be transported  
In an old, frizzled, flambeaued manner,  
But muses on its eccentricity,

Is like a vivid apprehension  
Of bliss beyond the mutes of plaster,  
Or paper souvenirs of rapture,

Of bliss submerged beneath appearance,  
In an interior ocean's rocking  
Of long, capricious fugues and chorals.

## Cortège for Rosenbloom

Now, the wry Rosenbloom is dead  
And his finical carriers tread,  
On a hundred legs, the tread  
Of the dead.  
Rosenbloom is dead.

They carry the wizened one  
Of the color of horn  
To the sullen hill,  
Treading a tread  
In unison for the dead.

Rosenbloom is dead.  
The tread of the carriers does not halt  
On the hill, but turns  
Up the sky.  
They are bearing his body into the sky.

It is the infants of misanthropes  
And the infants of nothingness  
That tread  
The wooden ascents  
Of the ascending of the dead.

It is turbans they wear  
And boots of fur

As they tread the boards  
In a region of frost,  
Viewing the frost.

To a chirr of gongs  
And a chitter of cries  
And the heavy thrum  
Of the endless tread  
That they tread.

To a jangle of doom  
And a jumble of words  
Of the intense poem  
Of the strictest prose  
Of Rosenbloom.

And they bury him there,  
Body and soul,  
In a place in the sky.  
The lamentable tread!  
Rosenbloom is dead.

## Tattoo

The light is like a spider.  
It crawls over the water.  
It crawls over the edges of the snow.  
It crawls under your eyelids  
And spreads its webs there—  
Its two webs.

The webs of your eyes  
Are fastened  
To the flesh and bones of you  
As to rafters or grass.

There are filaments of your eyes  
On the surface of the water  
And in the edges of the snow.

## The Bird with the Coppery, Keen Claws

Above the forest of the parakeets,  
A parakeet of parakeets prevails,  
A pip of life amid a mort of tails.

(The rudiments of tropics are around,  
Aloe of ivory, pear of rusty rind.)  
His lids are white because his eyes are blind.

He is not paradise of parakeets,  
Of his gold ether, golden alguazil.  
Except because he broods there and is still,

Panache upon panache, his tails deploy  
Upward and outward, in green-vented forms,  
His tip a drop of water full of storms.

But though the turbulent tinges undulate  
As his pure intellect applies its laws,  
He moves not on his coppery, keen claws.

He munches a dry shell while he exerts  
His will, yet never ceases, perfect cock,  
To flare, in the sun-pallor of his rock.

## Life Is Motion

In Oklahoma,  
Bonnie and Josie,  
Dressed in calico,  
Danced around a stump.  
They cried,  
“Ohoyaho,  
Ohoo” . . .  
Celebrating the marriage  
Of flesh and air.

## Architecture

### I

What manner of building shall we build?  
Let us design a chastel de chasteté.  
De pensée. . . .  
Never cease to deploy the structure.  
Keep the laborers shouldering plinths.  
Pass the whole of life earing the clink of the  
Chisels of the stone-cutters cutting the stones.

### II

In this house, what manner of utterance shall there be?  
What heavenly dithyramb  
And cantilene?  
What niggling forms of gargoyle patter?  
Of what shall the speech be,  
In that splay of marble  
And of obedient pillars?

### III

And how shall those come vested that come there?  
In their ugly reminders?  
Or gaudy as tulips?  
As they climb the stairs

To the group of Flora Coddling Hecuba?  
As they climb the flights  
To the closes  
Overlooking whole seasons?

#### IV

Let us build the building of light.  
Push up the towers  
To the cock-tops.  
These are the pointings of our edifice,  
Which, like a gorgeous palm,  
Shall tuft the commonplace.  
These are the window-sill  
On which the quiet moonlight lies.

#### V

How shall we hew the sun,  
Split it and make blocks,  
To build a ruddy palace?  
How carve the violet moon  
To set in nicks?  
Let us fix portals, east and west,  
Abhorring green-blue north and blue-green south.  
Our chiefest dome a demoiselle of gold.  
Pierce the interior with pouring shafts,  
In diverse chambers.  
Pierce, too, with buttresses of coral air  
And purple timbers,  
Various argentines,  
Embossings of the sky.

## VI

And, finally, set guardians in the grounds,  
Gray, gruesome grumbler.  
For no one proud, nor stiff,  
No solemn one, nor pale,  
No chaffierer, may come  
To sully the begonias, nor vex  
With holy or sublime ado  
The kremlin of kermess.

## VII

Only the lusty and the plenteous  
Shall walk  
The bronze-filled plazas  
And the nut-shell esplanades.

## The Wind Shifts

This is how the wind shifts:  
Like the thoughts of an old human,  
Who still thinks eagerly  
And despairingly.

The wind shifts like this:  
Like a human without illusions,  
Who still feels irrational things within her.

The wind shifts like this:  
Like humans approaching proudly,  
Like humans approaching angrily.

This is how the wind shifts:  
Like a human, heavy and heavy,  
Who does not care.

## Colloquy with a Polish Aunt

*Elle savait toutes les légendes du Paradis et tous les contes  
de la Pologne.*

*Revue des Deux Mondes*

*She*

How is it that my saints from Voragine,  
In their embroidered slippers, touch your spleen?

*He*

Old pantaloons, duenna of the spring!

*She*

Imagination is the will of things. . . .  
Thus, on the basis of the common drudge,  
You dream of women, swathed in indigo,  
Holding their books toward the nearer stars,  
To read, in secret, burning secracies. . . .

## Gubbinal

That strange flower, the sun,  
Is just what you say.  
Have it your way.

The world is ugly,  
And the people are sad.

That tuft of jungle feathers,  
That animal eye,  
Is just what you say.

That savage of fire,  
That seed,  
Have it your way.

The world is ugly,  
And the people are sad.

## Two Figures in Dense Violet Night

I had as lief be embraced by the porter at the hotel  
As to get no more from the moonlight  
Than your moist hand.

Be the voice of night and Florida in my ear.  
Use dusky words and dusky images.  
Darken your speech.

Speak, even, as if I did not hear you speaking,  
But spoke for you perfectly in my thoughts,  
Conceiving words,

As the night conceives the sea-sounds in silence,  
And out of their droning sibilants makes  
A serenade.

Say, puerile, that the buzzards crouch on the ridge-pole  
And sleep with one eye watching the stars fall  
Below Key West.

Say that the palms are clear in a total blue,  
Are clear and are obscure; that it is night;  
That the moon shines.

## Theory

I am what is around me.

Women understand this.  
One is not duchess  
A hundred yards from a carriage.

These, then are portraits:  
A black vestibule;  
A high bed sheltered by curtains.

These are merely instances.

## To the One of Fictive Music

Sister and mother and diviner love,  
And of the sisterhood of the living dead  
Most near, most clear, and of the clearest bloom,  
And of the fragrant mothers the most dear  
And queen, and of diviner love the day  
And flame and summer and sweet fire, no thread  
Of cloudy silver sprinkles in your gown  
Its venom of renown, and on your head  
No crown is simpler than the simple hair.

Now, of the music summoned by the birth  
That separates us from the wind and sea,  
Yet leaves us in them, until earth becomes,  
By being so much of the things we are,  
Gross effigy and simulacrum, none  
Gives motion to perfection more serene  
Than yours, out of our imperfections wrought,  
Most rare, or ever of more kindred air  
In the laborious weaving that you wear.

For so retentive of themselves are men  
That music is intensest which proclaims  
The near, the clear, and vaunts the clearest bloom,  
And of all vigils musing the obscure,  
That apprehends the most which sees and names,  
As in your name, an image that is sure,

Among the arrant spices of the sun,  
O bough and bush and scented vine, in whom  
We give ourselves our likest issuance.

Yet not too like, yet not so like to be  
Too near, too clear, saving a little to endow  
Our feigning with the strange unlike, whence springs  
The difference that heavenly pity brings.  
For this, musician, in your girdle fixed  
Bear other perfumes. On your pale head wear  
A band entwining, set with fatal stones.  
Unreal, give back to us what once you gave:  
The imagination that we spurned and crave.

## Hymn from a Watermelon Pavilion

You dweller in the dark cabin,  
To whom the watermelon is always purple,  
Whose garden is wind and moon,

Of the two dreams, night and day,  
What lover, what dreamer, would choose  
The one obscured by sleep?

Here is the plantain by your door  
And the best cock of red feather  
That crew before the clocks.

A feme may come, leaf-green,  
Whose coming may give revel  
Beyond revelries of sleep,

Yes, and the blackbird spread its tail,  
So that the sun may speckle,  
While it creaks hail.

You dweller in the dark cabin,  
Rise, since rising will not waken,  
And hail, cry hail, cry hail.

## Peter Quince at the Clavier

### I

Just as my fingers on these keys  
Make music, so the self-same sounds  
On my spirit make a music, too.

Music is feeling, then, not sound ;  
And thus it is that what I feel,  
Here in this room, desiring you,

Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk,  
Is music. It is like the strain  
Waked in the elders by Susanna ;

Of a green evening, clear and warm,  
She bathed in her still garden, while  
The red-eyed elders, watching, felt

The basses of their beings throb  
In witching chords, and their thin blood  
Pulse pizzicati of Hosanna.

### II

In the green water, clear and warm,  
Susanna lay.

She searched  
The touch of springs,  
And found  
Concealed imaginings.  
She sighed,  
For so much melody.

Upon the bank, she stood  
In the cool  
Of spent emotions.  
She felt, among the leaves,  
The dew  
Of old devotions.

She walked upon the grass,  
Still quivering.  
The winds were like her maids,  
On timid feet,  
Fetching her woven scarves,  
Yet wavering.

A breath upon her hand  
Muted the night.  
She turned—  
A cymbal crashed,  
And roaring horns.

### III

Soon, with a noise like tambourines,  
Came her attendant Byzantines.

They wondered why Susanna cried  
Against the elders by her side;

And as they whispered, the refrain  
Was like a willow swept by rain.

Anon, their lamps' uplifted flame  
Revealed Susanna and her shame.

And then, the simpering Byzantines  
Fled, with a noise like tambourines.

#### IV

Beauty is momentary in the mind—  
The fitful tracing of a portal;  
But in the flesh it is immortal.

The body dies; the body's beauty lives.  
So evenings die, in their green going,  
A wave, interminably flowing.  
So gardens die, their meek breath scenting  
The cowl of winter, done repenting.  
So maidens die, to the auroral  
Celebration of a maiden's choral.

Susanna's music touched the bawdy strings  
Of those white elders; but, escaping,  
Left only Death's ironic scraping.  
Now, in its immortality, it plays  
On the clear viol of her memory,  
And makes a constant sacrament of praise.

# Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird

## I

Among twenty snowy mountains,  
The only moving thing  
Was the eye of the black bird.

## II

I was of three minds,  
Like a tree  
In which there are three blackbirds.

## III

The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.  
It was a small part of the pantomime.

## IV

A man and a woman  
Are one.  
A man and a woman and a blackbird  
Are one.

## V

I do not know which to prefer,  
The beauty of inflections

Or the beauty of innuendoes,  
The blackbird whistling  
Or just after.

## VI

Icicles filled the long window  
With barbaric glass.  
The shadow of the blackbird  
Crossed it, to and fro.  
The mood  
Traced in the shadow  
An indecipherable cause.

## VII

O thin men of Haddam,  
Why do you imagine golden birds?  
Do you not see how the blackbird  
Walks around the feet  
Of the women about you?

## VIII

I know noble accents  
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;  
But I know, too,  
That the blackbird is involved  
In what I know.

## IX

When the blackbird flew out of sight,  
It marked the edge  
Of one of many circles.

## X

At the sight of blackbirds  
Flying in a green light,  
Even the bawds of euphony  
Would cry out sharply.

## XI

He rode over Connecticut  
In a glass coach.  
Once, a fear pierced him,  
In that he mistook  
The shadow of his equipage  
For blackbirds.

## XII

The river is moving.  
The blackbird must be flying.

## XIII

It was evening all afternoon.  
It was snowing  
And it was going to snow.  
The blackbird sat  
In the cedar-limbs.

## Nomad Exquisite

As the immense dew of Florida  
Brings forth  
The big-finned palm  
And green vine angering for life,

As the immense dew of Florida  
Brings forth hymn and hymn  
From the beholder,  
Beholding all these green sides  
And gold sides of green sides,

And blessed mornings,  
Meet for the eye of the young alligator,  
And lightning colors  
So, in me, come flinging  
Forms, flames, and the flakes of flames.

## Tea

When the elephant's-ear in the park  
Shrivelled in frost,  
And the leaves on the paths  
Ran like rats,  
Your lamp-light fell  
On shining pillows,  
Of sea-shades and sky-shades,  
Like umbrellas in Java.

## To the Roaring Wind

What syllable are you seeking,  
Vocalissimus,  
In the distances of sleep?  
Speak it.



THE END







